

Clark University

## Clark Digital Commons

---

Undergraduate Student Research Festivals

Winter Fest 2021

---

Jan 7th, 12:00 AM

# Restorative Justice as a Tool for Change in Confronting Sexual Violence on College Campuses

Ellie Safran

Clark University, esafran@clarku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.clarku.edu/asdff>

---

Safran, Ellie, "Restorative Justice as a Tool for Change in Confronting Sexual Violence on College Campuses" (2021). *Undergraduate Student Research Festivals*. 27.

[https://commons.clarku.edu/asdff/winter\\_fest\\_2021/winterfest2021/27](https://commons.clarku.edu/asdff/winter_fest_2021/winterfest2021/27)

This Open Access Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conference Proceedings at Clark Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Student Research Festivals by an authorized administrator of Clark Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [mkrikonis@clarku.edu](mailto:mkrikonis@clarku.edu), [jodolan@clarku.edu](mailto:jodolan@clarku.edu), [dlutz@clarku.edu](mailto:dlutz@clarku.edu).



# Restorative Justice as a Tool for Change in Confronting Sexual Violence on College Campuses

Ellie Safran '21 – (Sponsors: Dr. Nicole Overstreet & Gia Davis)



## INTRODUCTION

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment and assault.
- On college campuses, Title IX has often replicated issues within the criminal justice system, including:
  - A lack of respondent accountability.
  - Adverse psychological consequences for survivors.
- Alternative justice models can help, including restorative justice (RJ).
  - RJ: an intentional reconciling and healing process often used within institutions.

**Research Question:** How can RJ be used to alleviate many of the longstanding issues with Title IX?

## METHODS

- 13 articles were used in the review
- Articles were found on PsychINFO and Academic Search Premier, as well as from references of related articles
- Keywords: sexual assault, Title IX, adversarial justice, restorative justice, accountability.
- Articles used were within the scope of (1) psychological effects of sexual assault, (2) theoretical approaches to sexual assault, and (3) implementations of RJ.

## RESULTS



- RJ practices can provide:
  - **Flexibility:** The informal resolution process which RJ falls under allows for case-by-case decision making.
  - **Agency:** RJ prioritizes survivor autonomy by being survivor-led.
  - **Accountability:** Rather than proving their innocence, respondents are encouraged to take responsibility.
  - **Healing:** Has an explicit focus on healing and repairing the harm done.

## CONCERNS

- Some have concerns about using RJ for gender violence crimes, including:
  - The potential for survivors to be re-traumatized by working with the respondent.
  - A lack of consequences for the respondent.
- Concerns for the survivor are mostly mitigated by the process which prioritizes survivor needs and well-being.
- Respondents do face consequences for their actions during the RJ process, though perhaps not punitive ones such as expulsion or arrest.
- RJ requires a paradigm shift for:
  - Viewing the survivor as strong and agentive.
  - Prioritizing accountability and change over punishment.

## WIDER VISION

- Promotion and utilization of alternative justice methods rather than retributive justice.
- Growing out of carceral feminism, or a reliance on the prison industrial complex to fight sexual violence.
- Choosing accountability practices which do not recreate injustice for marginalized communities.
- Holding societal and structural forces accountable for the maintenance of sexual violence.